

Mayor's State of the City Address 2006

January 17, 2006

"The Power of Partnerships - Driving Durham's Future"

Welcome! It is my privilege to continue the practice that I began upon becoming Mayor in 2001 and that is to deliver the State of the City Address. Tonight represents my fourth State of the City Address. As your mayor, it is always interesting to look back at what the City has accomplished or not accomplished against our projected goals. The State of the City Address allows us to do that. It obviously is impossible to capture all of a year's activities in a 20-to-30 minute address, so we will attempt to highlight the most important.

I want to thank all of you for taking time to be with us this evening, and I'd especially like to recognize my colleagues on the City Council, who are here with us tonight, for their support and leadership of this City.

I especially wanted to deliver this year's "State of the City" Address at the beginning of our regular City Council meeting to ensure that it would receive as wide of an audience as possible and to allow those who may not have been able to attend in person to have an opportunity to watch via Cable TV.

In past addresses, we have used different themes to reflect the City's status and the environment in which we have operated. This year's theme is about **the Power of Partnerships - Driving Durham's Future**.

The value of partnerships, or working together to accomplish a goal, has been evident throughout our history. In fact, the great American, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we celebrated yesterday, recognized that only by coming together as a community - the haves working hand in hand with the have nots - could we ever hope to solve the problems - racism, unemployment, violence, war, and poverty - that existed then, and that exist today.

He said: ***"There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society, with a large segment of people in that society who feel they do not have a stake in it; who feel they have nothing to lose. People, who have a stake in their society, protect that society, but when they don't, they unconsciously want to destroy it."***

What does that mean for us in Durham today? It means simply that everyone must be partners at the table, in body and spirit, to find solutions for such problems as crime, particularly violent crime in our City. But before I address the issue of crime, let me talk about what the power of partnerships helped Durham accomplish in 2005. Indeed, as various partners stepped forth as leaders, giant steps were made that will set the stage for our future.

As you will see, the City's partners last year represented people from all walks of life - they were ordinary citizens, they were community leaders, educators, business people, retirees, non-profits, youth, the faith-based community and neighborhoods. In a phrase, what we accomplished last year could be summarized as **"good to excellent."**

- Thanks to the voters and leaders in our community, we passed a \$110 million bond package for vital improvements- roads, water and sewer, parks and recreation, public buildings, parking decks, and other infrastructure needs throughout Durham. Nathan and Wanda Garrett and Cynthia Brodhead made the powerful point that, "Durham is our home, and if it needs fixing, then we must do that." I would be remiss if I didn't thank Webb Patterson Communications, Duke University, and Downtown Durham, Inc. for their leadership roles.
- Thanks to citizens and businesses, our economy continued to prosper - retail sales tax grew 8.5 percent, the number of building permits issued and the value of construction taking place in Durham hit an all-time high of \$897 million!
- The City and County jointly adopted a new Unified Development Ordinance and Comprehensive Land Use plan to help guide the development of our community over the long range.
- Downtown development was highlighted with the kick off of downtown's streetscape project in April, with a major contribution from Sun Trust Bank. And new businesses chose to relocate in Durham. Welcome!
- Parrish Street, also known as Black Wall street, got the green light to move ahead to develop what will be a "destination point" for our great City. In coming years, we'll see new life breathed into the street as it comes alive with businesses and as a museum without walls, if you will, to keep the street's history alive for all to celebrate and emulate. Thanks to the Parrish Street Advocacy group led by Nathan Garrett for guiding this project, so vital to Durham's history and future.
- Thanks to the residents, developers, and businesses, there was continued inner-city neighborhood development such as Gattis Street on the West End and Barnes Avenue and HOPE VI in northeast central Durham to cite a few.
- Both the City and County partnered with citizens, businesses, and educators to adopt a Results Based Accountability system that will result in a report card to give citizens a progress report on how well local

government is serving our citizens in areas such as the environment, public safety, and education, just to name a few.

As I said earlier, it would be impossible to do little more than highlight our accomplishments in the time that we have here tonight. A brochure, Durham Year in Review 2005, is available here tonight, and it also will be posted on the City's website, along with locations where you can pick up a copy.

As we look back, evidenced by the City's strong economic indicators - low unemployment, tax base growth and retail sales, good to great things happened in the City. Comparing those results with those of other similar cities, the overall "State of Durham" is good. However, I want to spend the majority of my report on, what I feel is the one area that prevents us from being an excellent City, and that is **crime**.

I don't have to tell you that crime continues to have a negative effect on our City's image. I look forward to the year, in which we no longer have to focus on the effects that crime has on our City, our economy, and most importantly our children. **We as a community must make that happen - we can't afford not to make it happen.**

Tonight, I would like to share my thoughts on what it will take to effectively address the factors that drive crime in our community. Before I do that, let's look at what happened in Durham last year.

According to the FBI crime comparison, our crime statistics are better than most cities of our size. We showed an overall decrease of 5 percent in violent crime and 2 percent of total crimes in Durham. And, upon further analysis of the circumstances, the vast majority of the crimes committed were not random - in other words, the suspect and victim knew each other or were somehow associated with drugs or possibly the gang lifestyle.

The Preliminary Year End Crime report shows that the City's murder rate jumped 16 percent -- 37 homicides in Durham in 2005 compared to 32 in 2004.

- 78% (29) of the 37 homicide victims were Black.
- 14 % (5) of the 37 homicide victims were White
- 8% (3) of the 37 homicide victims were Hispanic.
- 24% (9) of the 37 homicide victims were 19 years or younger.
- So far 39 suspects have been identified as alleged suspects in the 37 homicides.
- Firearms were involved in 29 of the 37 homicides or 78% of the homicides were caused by guns.
- 16 (41%) of the 39 suspects were 19 years old or younger and all had firearms.

Let me say that as an African American Male and as your Mayor, what is most disturbing to me personally about those numbers is that the vast majority of the victims and suspects are African American Males (Stated in other terms in 2005 in Durham we experienced a tragedy of high proportions of "Black on Black" homicides). It is common knowledge that as African Americans we are vastly over represented in the prison and jail populations in proportion to our representation in the overall population in cities and states throughout the nation. It is also felt that injustice or lack of access to justice or adequate representation and economics contributes to Blacks and minorities being jailed and imprisoned much higher than their representation in the population.

But we can't blame injustice or lack of representation on the fact that we as a race are committing murders far out of how proportion to how we are represented in the City of Durham, North Carolina.

As a society we can talk about root causes such as poverty, economics, broken families, racial discrimination, lack of education and job training as contributors to our plight as a race, but we should never get in the position of letting it be an excuse or a cause for taking another person's life.

As African Americans, we are approximately 43% of the City's population, yet in the year 2005, we allegedly were responsible for committing over 80% of the homicides. That figure is not about justice or injustice, it is about knowingly doing wrong, committing one of the ultimate crimes, and violating one of the Ten Commandments, "Thy Shall Not Kill".

However the numbers, sadly, do not tell the whole story.

The numbers cannot show the pain of a grandmother and grandfather who won't see their grandson again due to a senseless shooting, that years ago, would have been at worst a fist fight.

What is the solution? The solution or answer lies within us and it is a problem that will require the community to take ownership for solving. No matter where you live, if you live in our high end residential communities or you live in our low wealth residential communities or if you live some where in between, we are all stakeholders in reducing crime in our City. It is an answer for which we all must be accountable. **But, clearly, in my opinion, there are several key areas upon which we must focus and factors which I think are driving crime in general, and**

specifically violent crime in our community. Those factors are: Parental Involvement, Guns, Drugs, and Economics.

1. Parental Involvement

We must focus on our children. We, as parents, guardians, educators, and a community must be more vigilant about our children, about teaching them personal responsibility -- knowing ***and showing that you know right from wrong***. I am convinced that in Durham the vast majority of our citizens are doing this, but for the smaller minority of our citizens who are not providing this positive guidance, we must do a better job to help our young people refrain from using violence as a means to resolving their disputes, or who are using violent tactics for monetary gains.

You don't even have to be a parent to help a child. There are many young people in our community who could benefit greatly by just having a responsible adult spend a few hours a week with them assisting as mentors. Many persons throughout our community are already serving as mentors, such as our own city councilman Howard Clement who volunteers several hours a week at Fayetteville Street Elementary School. The "Rites of Passage" program is another community organization that is doing a great job in providing mentorship for African American males as are many other organizations throughout our City. But it is not enough; we need many more to assist. Howard with his experience has specifically made a call for more African American males to help. I agree with his call.

I am tonight calling on our citizens to make a commitment to become a mentor for at least one young person in Durham. I am going to ask that you call the Volunteer Center of Durham and give your name, address, and telephone number to one of the volunteer coordinators indicating that you would like to volunteer to become a mentor as part of your contribution to helping reduce crime in our community. (The number is 688-8977.)

Although I have spoken specifically of African American male mentors, my appeal goes out to any person of any race to volunteer. One school program that is looking for such adults to serve as mentors is Neal Middle School's 21st Century Community Learning Center. The director of that program Ms. Rita Rogers is here tonight, and she would welcome your help in being a mentor to their students. If you have an opportunity to speak with her she can give you a compelling story of the importance of mentoring and how it can make a big difference in a student being a failure or achiever academically and or socially.

The bottom line is: Parents and guardians, whether we are single, married, separated, divorced, rich, poor and just making ends meet, we have got to be involved in a more meaningful and positive way in our children's lives. I think also that we shouldn't be afraid or ashamed to ask for help in our parenting skills. It is just that simple, and I am going to leave it at that.

2. Illegal Use and Easy Access to Guns

We must focus on the illegal use and possession of guns. When a young person can easily obtain a gun in our society, something is wrong. We must determine where the guns are coming from, how are young people getting them, and what can we do to stop this.

As I noted earlier, last year, 29 of the 37 victims of homicide in the City were killed with guns. Six of the victims were teenagers and 17 victims were in their twenties. Equally alarming is, that of the suspects charged in Durham's 2005 gun homicides, all but four are of similar age or younger than the victim, including fifteen teenagers arrested thus far.

When guns are used to commit crimes, their usage intensifies the violence and increases the likelihood of death. Most of Durham's 2005 gun homicides were not random and not gang-related. They began as disputes and robberies and ended with someone's death because of a firearm, most likely a handgun.

Tonight, I am asking City Council members to support me in calling for the city manager to use all available resources to mount a campaign to remove illegal guns from our community and specifically, to make getting guns out of the hands of our young people a top priority. The focus should also include persons with prior criminal convictions who are legally prohibited from possessing guns. I know that to some, this may seem to be an impossible task and even a utopian idea, **but it is a task that we as a community must undertake.**

Three years ago, the Police Department began a program called "Project Safe Neighborhoods," with the primary focus of reducing gun violence in our community. At the same time, we also began a gun violence reduction strategy in partnership with other local and state and federal law enforcement agencies. We set a goal of reducing violent incidents with guns, including homicides, by 20%, which we failed to achieve.

Project Safe Neighborhoods was developed by the U.S. Attorney's Office and is being used successfully in other cities here in North Carolina and across the nation. It is based on a strategic framework of five principals: Research, Training, Partnerships, Community Outreach, and Accountability. We must make this program work for us here in Durham.

In the next few weeks, I would like meet with the leaders of this program to determine how we can make it more effective, and involve our citizens in the process. Reducing gun violence is a task that cannot be achieved by law

enforcement agencies alone. I believe that enlisting the ideas, practices, and participation of our citizens to stop gun violence in our community is crucial to our success.

It also is imperative that Durham citizens know the risks and legal obligations of owning a gun. Did you know that most guns used in crime by young people were traced to a legal gun purchaser whose gun then changed hands without obtaining the proper permits? Parents of teens should take special precautions and check their homes for illegal guns. Here in Durham, legal gun owners and sellers can protect the public simply by knowing the risks and following the rules of responsible gun ownership.

I am convinced that, if properly implemented, gun crime analysis can provide the means for suppressing, intervening, and preventing gun injury, death, and endangerment. By using current, reliable data we should be able to direct our actions as well as account for their results.

2006 must be the year when cooperation and collaboration between the Police Department, District Attorney, the Office of the Sheriff, Juvenile Justice, Probation, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, and other state and federal law enforcement agencies become the norm and not the exception. Working together, the scope and character of Durham's gun crimes and illegal gun market can be understood and gun laws can be aggressively enforced. Gun traffickers, straw purchasers, and gun crime offenders can be identified, hotspots of gun crime readily addressed, and resources intensively targeted to confiscate illegal guns and prosecute gun offenders to the full extent of the law.

My comments are not meant to diminish the efforts of our law enforcement agencies, because they are doing a good job in many areas. In fact, Project Safe Neighborhoods successfully partnered with various other agencies to show hundreds of Durham youth that there are alternatives to joining a gang through other recreational and vocational activities. Also, the Project's street worker/community outreach worker worked one-on-one with gang members to find them jobs, job training or to get them into appropriate educational settings.

While these strides are being made, I feel passionately that now is the time that we must do more - because guns predominate as the instrument of violent crime in Durham, aggressive investigation and prosecution of gun-related crimes must be one of this City's top priorities in the New Year.

As we move into this year we must also constantly review on a more regular basis how we address crime in our communities. It has been suggested that we may want to bring in a leading outside private consultancy with deep expertise in working with municipalities and their police departments to assist the City of Durham and its Police Department to:

- Evaluate our current practices.
- Benchmark us against comparable municipalities and agencies.
- Provide us with cutting-edge best practices recommendations.
- Work with us to implement the necessary changes in the way we address crime in our City.

I will be speaking with the city manager, the police chief, and the city council concerning this suggestion, but nothing should be read into this statement as my having less confidence in our police department.

3. Drugs

The solution to ridding our community of drugs has to be answered with both a law enforcement and a treatment strategy.

Now is the time for our two local law enforcement agencies the **Durham Police Department and the Office of the Sheriff**, to more closely coordinate their efforts to fight drugs in our community. The citizens and taxpayers in my opinion would welcome and support a more public display and action to jointly fight crime in Durham. I have, therefore, asked our city manager, our police chief, and the sheriff to develop a coordinated approach for ridding our community of the drug dealers at all levels in our community. They, in turn, have assured me that they are willing to work in an even greater effort to communicate, cooperate, and collaborate in fighting crime in our community, specifically as it relates to drugs.

I am glad to see that members of the Durham Board of County Commissioners and the county manager are present tonight. I know that they share our concern about crime in our community and we welcome their continued support in our community's crime reduction effort. We should collectively send the message by police and sheriff's actions that drug dealing, no matter what the demand, is not going to be tolerated in our City and County. That message should be delivered with a more aggressive attack against those dealing drugs as well as those who come into our community seeking drugs.

I realize that some persons in our City and County are addicted to drugs or are substance abuse users and some persons may be considered as more recreational drug users rather than true addicts. However, no matter how the user is classified, it is **that demand**, which drives the drug traffic in our community and this nation. I also realize that many of these persons who are addicted really would like and need help in kicking their habits. That is why we as a community should work together to help drug addicts who want to end their addiction. I know from my conversations

with County Commissioner Chairwoman Ellen Reckhow that the County through the Durham Center (formerly known as the Mental Health Department) has made great progress in this arena of drug treatment, but we somehow as a community have got to do more. Substance abuse is a community issue, not just a Durham Center or Durham County issue.

I am also pleased to see representatives from Duke University and North Carolina Central University here tonight. I know also that drug treatment is not an area that the City normally funds. However, I am requesting that the City Council, working with the Board of County Commissioners, and our two great universities, NCCU and Duke, find the resources to provide additional substance abuse treatment facilities and other assistance to those citizens who seriously want to stop abusing drugs.

4. Economics:

Many of our young people say they are driven to crime for monetary reasons. Many also lack the training or education to get jobs. Many ex-offenders who are in our community also have problems finding jobs because of their prison records, and crime becomes another temptation. Those circumstances, in my opinion, are not valid reasons for committing crimes, but the reality is that those are some of the reasons that crimes are committed.

- Non-profits, such as Men of Vision and the John Avery Boys & Girls Club, are working with high-risk youth to help turn them away from gangs.
- The City has been helping ex-offenders responsibly re-enter society with job training and jobs through the Re-Entry Program and the REPAIR program, which last year, with the help of Weed and Seed dollars, trained 18 young people in carpentry. Several of these participants are now working full time.
- I along with the city manager and police chief have worked directly with the staff of Project Safe Neighborhoods, the P.R.O.U.D program, and the Men of Vision to establish Project STRIKE. This program identifies gang members and other individuals with extensive criminal backgrounds who have expressed and demonstrated a sincere desire to leave the gang and criminal culture behind. Individuals participating in this program must also agree to serve as mentors and role models for young people in their community who have not yet made the commitment to leave the gang and crime culture. A continuing and intensive support system of professionals and mentors are assigned to the individuals in this program to prepare them to secure and sustain meaningful employment and educational opportunities. Since the program's inception just over one month ago, 10 individuals (all black males under 30 years old) have been selected for the program and I am happy to report that last week, three of the participants accepted employment offers from the City. We hope to place the remaining seven individuals in jobs in the public and private sector as well as to begin to recruit our second class of participants before the end of this month.
- The Mayor's Summer Youth Works Program has only been able to place approximately 300 plus young people, but we have had over 1,300 young people (middle and high school students) apply for positions. Businesses such as Streuver Brothers, GlaxoSmithKline, and Measurement Inc., have donated thousands of dollars to this program. We urgently need help from the business community in closing this gap to provide jobs for our youth.
- I also want to pay special thanks and recognition to Measurement Inc. and its president Hank Sherich, who as a private company, are leading the way in hiring ex-offenders in meaningful and well-paying jobs.

Measurement Inc.'s practice of hiring ex-offenders is a practice that I would challenge other companies in Durham to emulate. I am calling on the business community through the leadership of the Greater Durham Chamber of Commerce to step up their efforts to find meaningful employment and training for those citizens such as has been demonstrated by Measurement Inc. and the companies I mentioned earlier. It is also an issue that I would like our N.C. General Assembly Durham delegation to work on and seek solutions to removing the barriers that ex-offenders have in securing jobs.

Let me close this discussion by saying that we will all eventually lose in every aspect of who and what we are as a community, if we don't bring everyone to the table as a partner to fight our major albatross, and that is crime. As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, people who feel they don't have a stake in society want to destroy it. The solution is now up to us.

Finally, let me close on some positive notes. If you leave with one message, you should know that the state of our City is strong.

Here are the three major reasons why.

1. The City continues its sound financial footing:

- Our AAA Bond rating was affirmed twice last year by all three major bond ratings agencies.
- Our recent financial audit, conducted by an independent auditor, was clean.
- **City administration and employees are doing a great job of meeting our goals and being responsive to citizen needs** - from providing the basics, like water, garbage collection, affordable and safe

housing, to going above and beyond the call of duty. In fact, last year, the City Council recognized many employees for their heroic actions to save lives or simply to volunteer in their communities to make life better for another person. Durham One Call, the City's one-call information line, continues to have an impact, answering more than 200,000 calls from citizens, and achieving a high satisfaction rating.

- **Citizen involvement is strong.** From the City's bond referendum, to the American Center for the Performing Arts, to Parrish Street to shaping our cityscape, the people of Durham will be heard. And confidence in our administration appears to be strong. The City is clearly on the right track in forming advisory councils for almost every important project we are undertaking. I must add that I am especially proud of our **Youth Council**, the more than 31 youth who are volunteering to serve as advisors to the City to see that their various needs are met.

Last year proved to me that Durham is a City that was reflective of a quote by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said:

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. ... You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

The vast majority of the people in Durham are great because in their own ways they served unselfishly with demonstrated hearts of grace full of a loving soul.

Thank you for your time and your support. God bless you and God bless Durham.